MI/Access
Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MICHIGAN
Department of
Education

The Assist
Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

Training Time Is Here

Dear Readers,

As the weather changes, so do our priorities. In the August issue of *The Assist* we brought you up to date on our many summer activities, such as the rater reliability research project and federal initiatives that will impact the assessment of students with disabilities. Now it is time to turn our attention to MI-Access training.

Soon, District MI-Access Coordinators will be receiving training materials, and will notice there have been some improvements based on the feedback received. That is why it is so important that all District MI-Access Coordinators and their assessment teams—not just those new to MI-Access—attend one of the four fall conferences. (October 18 in East Lansing, October 24 in Grand Rapids, October 31 in Livonia, and November 7 in Gaylord.)

Not only will we review what was done last year, we will also provide information on how to interpret and use MI-Access results, and elaborate on issues that are still challenging assessment administrators—such as how to determine which assessment a student should take, how to write "as expecteds for this student" and what level of "prompting" is allowed.

For those of you who are completely new to MI-Access, the conferences will include a one-day "training of the trainers" session similar to that conducted at last year's conferences. We

Alan Lentz, Laurie Jefsen, Pam Nyhof

Kalamazoo RESA & Local Districts Collaborate On MI-Access Training

By: Laurie Jefsen,
Planner/Monitor, Kalamazoo RESA,
Pam Nyhof, CI classroom teacher for
the Comstock Public Schools, and
Alan Lentz, Supervisor of Special Education,
Galesburg-Augusta
Community Schools

Intermediate school districts, local districts and classroom teachers all have a role in preparing staff for participation in MI-Access. The Eastern Service Area (ESA) Leadership Team of Kalamazoo County and Kalamazoo RESA met last school year to determine the best way to provide MI-Access training to the special education staff in the ESA. The ESA Leadership Team, a regional team consisting of the supervisors/coordinators of special education for the five districts that make up the ESA, worked with Kalamazoo RESA to develop a two-part approach to training.

The first part involved providing training to the special education staff in each of the five school districts on the basic intent of MI-Access and how to determine assessment

Check it out!

The assessment component of the
Office of Special Education and Early
Intervention Services' Web site
www.mi.gov/mde

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

MI-Access Coordinator Designation Information Is Overdue!

We have already begun sending training materials to districts for the winter 2002/2003 administration of MI-Access. These materials are being sent to the District MI-Access Coordinator of record. If we have not received an updated Coordinator Designation Form from your district, materials will be sent to last year's Coordinator.

If you have not received your training materials—or need additional materials—please call us immediately at the toll-free MI-Access Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or e-mail us at mi-access@tasa.com. You will need the training materials for the MI-Access "training of the trainers" conferences scheduled for October 18th in East Lansing, October 24th in Grand Rapids, October 31st in Livonia, and November 7th in Gaylord. Each special education professional who may potentially be involved in administering MI-Access should receive a training packet.

Form Name Change for 2003

Last year, *Determined by IEP Team (Not Participation or Supported Independence) Scannable Forms* should have been completed for all students who did not participate in the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence. For the 2003 administration of MI-Access, the name of that form has been changed to *Students Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access Scan Form*. These forms (which will be included with your assessment materials) must be completed and shipped to BETA/TASA with your MI-Access Student Observation Sheets no later than April 11, 2003.
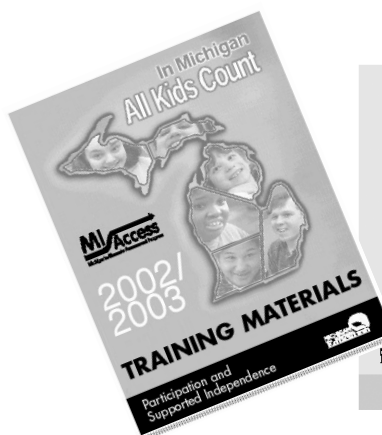
Training Time Is Here

will walk you through all the training materials (many of which have been revised) and provide opportunities to practice determining levels of independence as well as scoring observations of actual students.

In addition to staying up to date on MI-Access, attending the training conferences is important to keep rater reliability high. We will share with you some of what was learned in our research project about what is working, what is not, and how training needs to be revised to ensure maximum objectivity in scoring. Our goal with the training conferences is to do whatever it takes to continue making MI-Access a stronger and more useful tool not only for measuring—but also improving—student performance.

We look forward to seeing you this fall.

Sincerely,

Peggy Dutcher
Coordinator, State Assessment
for Students with Disabilities
E-mail: **dutcherp@mi.gov**

How Reliable Are MI-Access Raters?

Because MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments rely on teacher observations, there has been some concern—among assessment developers as well as those in the field—that they are susceptible to subjectivity.

While it is true that *all* observation-based assessments are susceptible to some subjectivity, too much subjectivity can seriously undermine the value and credibility of an assessment. For that reason, in 2002, the MDE joined with Western Michigan University (WMU), Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc. (BETA), and Future Media Corporation, to conduct a first-of-its-kind rater reliability research project in Michigan.

Research Study Participants

During spring 2002, more than 125 observations were videotaped by Future Media Corporation from the perspective of the teacher (that is, the camera "saw" what the teacher saw). Those observations covered nearly every activity included in the 2002 MI-Access assessments. The videotaped observations were then recorded by age, assessment, and activity onto DVDs.

In addition, every teacher who conducted an observation on videotape was interviewed by a WMU researcher to determine the extent and perceived quality of his or her training prior to administering the assessment.

In July 2002, the MI-Access staff brought about 45 teachers, teacher consultants, special education professionals, administrators, and parents to a three-day retreat in Bellaire, Michigan. The first day of the retreat, the participants attended a MI-Access training session where they learned about MI-Access, why it was developed, and how it was implemented. They also participated in two hands-on training activities that helped them learn how to determine levels of independence and how to conduct and score an observation. The purpose of the training was to ensure that every rater had the same basic knowledge of MI-Access.
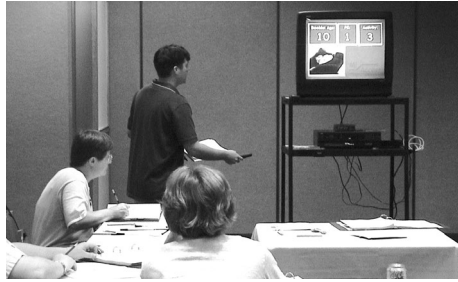
During the second and third days of the retreat, participants broke into six small groups (organized by assessment—Participation and Supported Independence—and age), watched the observations in a randomized order, and scored the students based on what they saw. Prior to watching the observations, raters were given case studies describing the general attributes of the student they would be observing and reviewed either the "as expecteds for this student" as written by the student's teacher or the levels of allowable assistance for a student of that age. After the retreat, participants also were interviewed, by phone, about the perceived quality of their training.

When the retreat concluded, WMU statisticians and special education researchers began the laborious process of comparing the ratings and interviews of the original teachers (or other professional observers) with the ratings and interviews of research raters. The goal of the comparison is to determine how reliable teacher ratings are, the role training plays in rater decisions, and how important it is for the rater to know the student first hand.

Research results also should provide information on the intra-rater reliability of school personnel (such as, teachers, principals, directors of special education) and non-school personnel (such as, parents). Reliability will be estimated via the Intraclass Correlation suitable for multiple raters (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

A preliminary report on the rater reliability research project is due to the MDE in December 2002. The results of the final report will be shared through several venues, including future issues of *The Assist*. As stated above, it is the hope of MI-Access staff that the research results will provide concrete data related to rater reliability and MI-Access.

MI-Access Fall Conference Schedule

REMINDER! If you have not done so already, please sign up for the fall MI-Access conference nearest you. The conferences are designed not only for those who are new to MI-Access, but also for those who want to obtain new and/or more detailed information on the assessments.

Following are the dates and locations of the conferences from which you can choose.

Friday, October 18 Kellogg Center East Lansing, MI	Thursday, October 31 Holiday Inn Livonia, MI
Thursday, October 24 Crowne Plaza Grand Rapids, MI	Thursday, November 7 Tree Tops Resort Gaylord, MI

You may use the flyer available on-line at **www.mi.gov/mde** to register or you may register on-line at **www.gomiem.org**. Advance registration is strongly recommended due to limited space.

PLEASE BRING LAST YEAR'S TRAINING VIDEOTAPES (BLUE COVER) FOR RECYCLING.

Keep Your Eyes Open for MI-Access Results

MI-Access Cut Scores

As mentioned in the August 2002 issue of *The Assist*, last spring and summer MI-Access cut scores went through a rigorous review and approval process. The last step that needed to occur before results could be released was for the Michigan State Board of Education (SBE) to approve the cut scores recommended by the MI-Access performance standard-setting panels, MI-Access committees, and, ultimately, the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS). On August 8, 2002, the SBE granted its full approval to the MI-Access cut scores. (See the tables on cut scores to the right.)

MI-Access Results

Once the scores were approved, MI-Access could move forward with producing and distributing MI-Access results. These results should be in districts sometime during November, and will include

- 2002 MI-Access reports (organized by age and assessment);

- multiple copies of the MI-Access Handbook (titled, *How to Understand, Interpret, and Use MI-Access Results*), which includes annotated sample reports; and

- multiple copies of the MI-Access Handbook Executive Summary CD-ROM.

The reports will be organized as follows:

1. State Results Booklet
2. District Results Folder (gold)
3. School Results Folders (purple)
4. Classroom Results Folders (white)

Approved Cut Scores for MI-Access Participation

Performance Category	Ages 9 and 10 (6 observations)	Ages 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 18 (8 observations)
Surpassed the Performance Standard	5-6	7-8
Attained the Performance Standard	3-4	4-6
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	0-2	0-3

Approved Cut Scores for MI-Access Supported Independence

Performance Category	Ages 9, 10, 13, and 14	Ages 17 and 18
Surpassed the Performance Standard	7-8	7-8
Attained the Performance Standard	4-6	5-6
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	0-3	0-4

RESULTS FOLDERS AND REPORTS	State Booklet	District Folder	School Folders	Classroom Folders
Summary Reports	X	X	X	
Listing Reports		X	X	X
Frequency Reports	X	X	X	
State Participation Rate Report	X			
District Participation Rate Report		X		
School Participation Rate Report			X	
Parent Reports			X	
Individual Student Reports				X
Disaggregated Summary Reports	X	X		
Student Labels			X	

MI-Access Results

Following is a list and brief description of the reports that may be included in each folder. (Please note that summary reports will be provided only when there are ten or more students of the same age in a district, school, or classroom that participated in the same assessment—Participation or Supported Independence. This is intended to help preserve student anonymity.)

◆ **State Results Booklet**

- State *Summary Reports*, which are executive summaries of student scores for the state, disaggregated by age and assessment
- *State Frequency Reports*, which show the frequency with which students in the state achieved specific scores
- *State Disaggregated Summary Reports*, which provide information on the overall performance of students in the state by various disaggregated categories
- One *State IEP Disaggregated Summary Report*, which provides information on all students for whom a *Determined by IEP Team scannable form* was submitted
- One *State Participation Rate Report*, which shows how many students in the state participated in alternate assessment, by age and grade

◆ **District Results Folder (gold)**

- *District Summary Reports*, which are executive summaries of student scores for the district, disaggregated by age and assessment
- *District Frequency Reports*, which show the frequency with which students in the district achieved specific scores
- *District Listing Reports*, which list in alphabetical order all students who participated in MI-Access in the district
- *District Disaggregated Summary Reports*, which provide information on the overall performance of students in a district by performance expectations and other categories
- One *District IEP Disaggregated Summary Report*, which shows all students who participated in some form of alternate assessment in the district
- One *District Participation Rate Report*, which shows how many students in the district participated in alternate assessment by age and grade

◆ **School Results Folders (purple)**

- *School Summary Reports*, which are executive summaries of student scores for the school
- *School Frequency Reports*, which show the frequency with which students in the school achieved specific scores and overall performance categories
- *School Listing Reports*, which list the names and scores of all students in the school who participated in MI-Access
- One *School Participation Rate Report*, which shows how many students in the school participated in any form of alternate assessment by age and grade
- Student Labels, which provide abbreviated information about a student's overall performance
- *Parent Reports*, which provide customized student assessment information to parents or guardians of the student

◆ **Classroom Results Folders (white)**

- *Classroom Listing Reports*, which list students alphabetically and show their overall performance, performance expectation scores, and performance requirement scores
- *Individual Student Reports*, which provide comprehensive information on how each student performed on MI-Access

All of the reports will be shipped by BETA/TASA to either the District MI-Access Coordinator or the District Superintendent, as determined at the time assessment materials were returned to the MI-Access operational contractor. That district liaison will manage the State and District Results Folders. He or she will also coordinate the distribution of the School and Classroom Folders to School MI-Access Coordinators.

At the school level, the School MI-Access Coordinator will (1) manage the School Results Folder, (2) coordinate the distribution of results from the Classroom Results Folder to all teachers who administered MI-Access or some other form of alternate assessment, and (3) oversee the distribution of Parent Reports to the parents and/or guardians of students who participated in MI-Access.

Teachers will manage their own Classroom Listing Reports and Individual Student Reports. Each teacher and School MI-Access Coordinator also will receive one copy of the MI-Access Handbook *How to Understand, Interpret, and Use MI-Access Results* and the MI-Access Handbook Executive Summary CD-ROM.

Results Communication Flow

If teachers have questions about results, they should ask their School MI-Access Coordinator for help. If that person cannot answer the question, he or she should refer them to the District MI-Access Coordinator. If that person cannot answer them, he or she should call the MI-Access operational contractor at the toll-free MI-Access hotline (1-888-382-4246) or e-mail them at mi-access@tasa.com. Information related to the assessment of students with disabilities can also be obtained at the MDE, OSE/EIS Web site at **www.mi.gov/mde**.

Phase 2 Update

Sheila Potter, Director of Curriculum Services, BETA/TASA

Our congratulations and sincere thanks to the MI-Access Phase 2 Assessment Plan Writing Team for its generous gifts of time, talent, experience, and devotion to students with special needs. The Team's work has been of the highest quality, and its success in meeting the August 1st deadline was astonishing.

Sheila Potter

After months of struggling with the seeming impossibility of designing a one-size-fits-all assessment for the diverse student population covered by Phase 2 MI-Access, the MI-Access Phase 2 Assessment Plan Writing Team (APWT) agreed to narrow its focus. Instead of looking at all the "Grand Canyon" students, as they were affectionately called, the APWT decided to focus only on those students whose skills were beyond those needed for the Supported Independence assessment, but not such that they could succeed on an alternate English language arts or mathematics assessment.

The group defined this population as students who have, or function as if they have, mild cognitive impairments. They have a limited ability to generalize learning across contexts, and their learning rates are significantly lower than the rates of their age-level peers. It was determined that these students could benefit from an assessment that reflected the Michigan Model Content Standards in English language arts, mathematics and career and employability skills.

As a result of this decision, a third sub-group was created to develop the career and employability portion of the assessment. (As you may recall, the Team already had subgroups dedicated to English language arts and mathematics.) The third sub-group went through the same tasks as the others—unpacking the state content standards related to career and employability,

extending appropriate benchmarks, and generating strategies for assessing relevant skills. They had some catching up to do, but the new sub-group worked fast and furious to reach the established deadlines.

Motivated by a common vision and clear target, the APWT made remarkable progress at its final retreat held at Shanty Creek Resort on July 25th and 26th. There, final decisions were made about content constructs, reporting of scores, assessment design, and test formats. All decisions were recorded and shared with the entire Team. Helpful feedback led to revised plans and, finally, the drafting of the actual MI-Access Phase 2 Plan was underway.

Between the retreat and the Team's final meeting on July 31, team members worked diligently to complete the sections of the plan for which they were responsible. Following some time to assemble various components of the English language arts and mathematics sections, the two subgroups submitted draft descriptions of their sections of the assessment. Components included:

• a statement of philosophy and best practices,
• a description of the population to be assessed,
• an explanation of the grades to be assessed (as prescribed in the No Child Left Behind Act, 2001),
• a description of the content areas and assessable constructs within them,
• recommended formats for the assessments,

• recommendations for when administration would occur, and
• recommendations for how scores would be reported and used.

An Assessment Blueprint was also developed. It consists of recommendations for the number of assessment items, the distribution of items by content standard and format, the amount of time to administer the assessment, and item prototypes.

The third subgroup—working on career and employability—continued to meet throughout August and submitted their draft descriptions in September.

Since this assessment plan focuses on only part (albeit the largest part) of the student population covered by Phase 2 MI-Access, it started being referred to as Phase 2.1. There are plans underway to develop a Phase 2.2 assessment plan from October through March. This plan will be tailored to the segment of the population *without* cognitive impairments, but *with* unique disabilities that affect their opportunities to learn, progress in the general education curriculum, and/or ability to demonstrate what they know and can do. While many of these students are able to participate in the MEAP with or without assessment accommodations, a few of them cannot. Therefore, alternate assessments in English language arts and mathematics (and eventually science) are needed for this group of students.

The draft Phase 2.1 plan developed by the APWT will be disseminated during late fall 2002 for field review and comment.

Kalamazoo RESA & Local Districts Collaborate On MI-Access Training

levels. A Powerpoint presentation provided information on MI-Access and MEAP testing dates and ages, along with the process for determining the level at which a student with special needs would be assessed.

At the end of the presentation, a work session was conducted that enabled special education teachers to project which students would likely be taking MI-Access as well as the levels at which their IEP Teams would probably recommend they be assessed. Using this list, supervisors were able to determine which teachers would be administering MI-Access and, thus, would need further training. In addition, we were able to use the lists to determine the approximate number of students who would be taking MI-Access and the number of training and assessment materials needed.

Once we determined who would be giving the assessment and about how many students would be taking MI-Access, we implemented the second part of the plan, which involved training teachers to administer MI-Access. A three-person team— including Laurie Jefsen, Planner/Monitor for Kalamazoo RESA; Pam Nyhof, CI classroom teacher for the Comstock Public Schools; and Alan Lentz, Supervisor of Special Education for Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools—planned and conducted this phase of the training.

The team made use of copies of the MI-Access training videotape from OSE/EIS and a satellite conference videotape to create the script for the training session. The training was then carried out by bringing staff members from the five districts together for a half-day session. Pam Nyhof had administered MI-Access during 2001 and her first-hand experience was much appreciated by the trainees.

The collaboration between the local education agencies, the ESA Leadership Team, and the local intermediate school district proved to be very successful and reduced the number of training sessions needed. For the coming school year, the ESA leadership team has decided that collaboration is, again, the way to go. The plan is to create an ESA MI-Access Coordinator, which will improve the MI-Access process within the ESA by having each school district on the same calendar. It also will reduce the number of calls and e-mails to MI-Access contract support personnel.

Other reasons for, and roles in, collaboration became very clear to participants.

- The *intermediate school district* provided initial information to districts on the new state assessment and technical information on determining levels of independence and, hence, which assessment a student might take. This assured consistent information across the county.

- The *local school districts* and *ESA* Team organized the training and provided the specifics on implementation that were necessary to meet the diverse needs of individual districts.

- And, training from a *classroom teacher* who had experience with the assessment proved invaluable to staff who had many questions about the assessment process.

There were lots of questions, but we had lots of answers!

GLOSSARY

Working Definition of Universal Skills: Skills students need to access and succeed in the general education curriculum, which transcend all content areas and career pathways. An example of universal skills would be organizing, prioritizing, sequencing, comprehension, understanding cause and effect, and so forth.

Inter-rater Reliability: The consistency with which two or more judges rate/score the work or performance of test takers (sometimes referred to as *inter-rater agreement.*)

Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access Scan Form: Formerly known as the *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form* that needs to be completed for all students whose IEP Teams have determined that the student will not participate in the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence.

Cut score: A specific point on a score scale, such that scores at or above that point are interpreted or acted upon differently from the scores below that point. *(Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing,* 1999.)

NOTE: MI-Access Reports Now Due to Districts in November 2002

Originally, MI-Access results were scheduled for return to districts in June 2002. Michigan's rigorous approval process for cut scores, however, has pushed the date back. **MI-Access results are now scheduled for release in November 2002.** We recognize that this may cause some educators and parents some inconvenience, but it is only for this first year. In future years, results will be returned in June. Thanks for your patience!

★ Important Date Change!

The MI-Access Live Teleconference was originally scheduled for mid-January but has been moved to January 29, 2003. Details will be available soon. Please note this on your calendars.

Important
MI-Access Dates

★ **2002 assessment results will be shipped in November.** ★

MI-Access Training Materials to Districts
First two weeks of October

MI-Access Conferences
October 18 – East Lansing @ Kellogg Center
October 24 – Grand Rapids @ Crowne Plaza Hotel
October 31 – Livonia @ Holiday Inn
November 7 – Gaylord @ Tree Tops Resort

★ **MI-Access Teleconference**
New Date • January 29, 2003 ★

2003 Assessment Window
February 17 – March 31, 2003

Ship MI-Access Assessment Materials to BETA/TASA
by April 11, 2003.

Bookmark these Web sites:

No Child Left Behind Information -
www.nochildleftbehind.gov/ and
www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/

IDEA connections with No Child Left Behind –
www.nasdse.org/home.htm

MI CLiMB information – **www.MTIP.org**

New MDE Web site – **www.mi.gov/mde**